

Opening Statement of
The Honorable Ralph M. Hall, Ranking Republican
Committee on Science and Technology
Full Committee Markup of H.R. 2698
The Federal Aviation Research and Development Reauthorization Act of 2007
June 22, 2007

Mr. Chairman, thank you for scheduling this morning's markup of H.R. 2698, legislation reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration's research and development programs for fiscal years 2008 through 2011. Let me say at the outset that I support this legislation and I urge all Members to support it as well. It is a good bill.

The bill authorizes a total of \$1.88 billion in R&D spending over four years. While this number may appear to some to be fairly substantial, when compared to overall spending requested by the FAA, R&D funding is about 3.5% of the agency's annual spending. This is an extraordinarily small amount for an organization as heavily dependent on maintaining a national network of communications, navigation and surveillance technologies as is FAA, and it's possible only because some of its R&D work is performed by NASA.

H.R. 2698 fully funds the administration's budget request for FAA R&D, and includes several increases for R&D projects that total \$117 million over the life of the bill, or about 6.5% above the Administration's request. It also assumes full funding responsibility for two important R&D activities: the Joint Planning and Development Office, and the Center for Advanced Aviation Systems Design.

The bill before us this morning is comprehensive and makes a number of needed improvements, but in the time remaining, I will confine my remarks to provisions dealing with the Joint Planning and Development Office (JPDO).

The Federal Aviation Administration manages the safest and busiest airspace system in the world, and all indications point to a doubling of the number of users within the next ten to twelve years. The biggest R&D challenge confronting FAA is keeping pace with this growth before routine gridlock pervades our entire airspace system.

Four years ago, during the last reauthorization cycle of FAA programs, this Committee authored the provision creating the Joint Planning and Development Office that was directed to coordinate the design and development of a Next Generation Air Transportation System that will, by the year 2025, be capable of handling three times the current level of traffic without any degradation in safety. The Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Commerce, Transportation, as well as NASA and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy all play key roles in this endeavor.

The bill before us this morning strengthens the JPDO's ability to coordinate and direct these agencies as they work together to develop the Next Generation system. It directs the JPDO to establish a clear set of milestones, it strengthens the roles and

responsibilities of the office's top management, and it directs participating agencies to designate – and hold accountable – a senior career official tasked with managing JPDO-related activities. These are good and necessary improvements.

As noted in your opening statement, this bill also makes a number of other improvements that will give FAA the tools it needs to keep our airspace system the safest and most efficient in the world.

Before closing, I do want to note, for the record, several concerns raised by NASA regarding a small number of provisions in this bill. Before it goes to the House floor, I want to express my hope to the Chairman that he would work with us to address them as best we can.

Mr. Chairman, I want to take a moment to highlight the close and cooperative work of the majority staff in putting this bill together, particularly Dick Obermann. Throughout this entire markup process, Dick consulted with our staff frequently and openly, seeking the minority's input on the bill's provisions and report language. All committee staff, on both sides, should strive to follow Dick's good example.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.